

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-05 VO-03 SCA-01
INSE-00 SS-15 NSC-05 H-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /085 W
-----018541 011503Z /46

R 011259Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7932
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USMISSION USUN

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: FRENCH VIEWS OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEMS

REF: (A) STATE 190638, (B) STATE 197014,
(C) STATE 204849

SUMMARY: WE CONVEYED US GRATITUDE FOR FRENCH PROGRAM FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES AND ASKED FRENCH TO ENCOURAGE OTHER COUNTRIES TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING. CHAYET SAID THAT CURRENT FRENCH PROGRAM OF 1,000 A MONTH WOULD BE MAINTAINED, BUT THAT GOF WAS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED BY THE CONTINUING REDUCTION IN QUALITY OF THE REFUGEE CANDIDATES. AT SOME POINT THE GOF MAY BE UNDER PRESSURE TO CURTAIL THEIR PROGRAM. THE LOW QUALITY OF REFUGEE LED TO THE VIEW THAT THE RECENT REFUGEES ARE QUALITATIVELY DIFFERENT: ECONOMIC MIGRANTS NOT POLITICAL REFUGEES. THE GOF CONTINUES TO OPPOSE FORCEFUL REPATRIATION, BUT
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UNDERSTANDS THE PRESSURES FOR IT IN THAILAND. WHILE RECOGNIZING THAI GENEROSITY, FRENCH ARE INCLINED TO THINK THE NEW APPROACH MAY BE DESIGNED TO EXTRACT MORE MONEY FROM COUNTRIES WHICH TRADITIONALLY AID REFUGEES.
END SUMMARY.

1. WE CONVEYED TO DIRECTOR FOR ADMINISTRATIVE

CONVENTIONS AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS CLAUDE CHAYET US
GRATITUDE FOR GOF'S GENEROUS REFUGEE POLICY AND OUR
REQUEST THAT FRANCE CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE OTHER
COUNTRIES TO TAKE IN MORE INDOCHINESE REFUGEES (PARA 10
REF A). CHAYET SAID THAT UNDER THE SPECIFIC REFUGEE
PROGRAM, FRANCE HAD TAKEN IN 28,000 REFUGEES AND BY THE
END OF THE YEAR WOULD HAVE TAKEN IN SOME 34,000. CHAYET
NOTED THAT WITH EACH MONTH, THEY WERE IN GENERAL FINDING
THAT THE REFUGEES, EVEN THOSE THEY WERE TAKING, SPOKE
FRENCH FAR LESS WELL, WERE LESS CAPABLE, HAD RELATIVES
IN FRANCE WHO WERE MORE DISTANT, AND WERE IN GENERAL
LESS READILY ASSIMILATED IN FRANCE. FRANCE THEREFORE
WAS WORRIED ABOUT ITS ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO BRING IN
1,000 A MONTH SINCE THE PROGRAM MAY COME UNDER ATTACK AS
THE REFUGEES APPEAR TO BE LESS AND LESS POLITICAL
REFUGEES, FOR WHICH FRANCE COULD BE CONSIDERED A
SUITABLE DESTINATION. ALREADY MANY OF THOSE CROSSING
THE BORDER FROM LAOS TO THAILAND COULD NOT INDICATE
THAT THEY WERE BEING SPECIALLY PERSECUTED FOR REASONS OF
RACE OR THEIR POLITICS AND IN GENERAL THEY GAVE AS
REASONS FOR DEPARTURE MERELY THAT THEY DID NOT LIKE THE
CURRENT REGIME.

2. THE GOF HAS NO INTENTION OF CHANGING ITS POLICY OF
BRINGING IN 1,000 A MONTH, BUT CHAYET THOUGHT ONE SHOULD
BE THINKING AHEAD BECAUSE ONE DAY THERE MAY BE PRESSURES
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WITHIN FRANCE TO STOP THE CURRENT PROGRAM. FRANCE WAS
AWARE THAT BOTH THE RTG AND THE UNHCR HAD BEEN MOVING
TOWARD A DEFINITION OF REFUGEES THAT WOULD PERMIT A
DISTINCTION BETWEEN "POLITICAL" AND "ECONOMIC" REFUGEE,
TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE LATTER (REF C). THEY REALIZE
THAT AN ELEMENT OF THAT POLICY WOULD BE THE FORCEFUL
RETURN OF "ECONOMIC REFUGEES". ALREADY THE CHAIRMAN OF
THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF FRANCO-INDOCHINESE AID, JEAN
SAITENEY, HAD CONTACTED HIM ABOUT THE THAI SHIFT TOWARD
FORCEFUL REPATRIATION, AND HE HAD ASSURED SAITENEY THAT
THE GOF CONTINUED TO OPPOSE SUCH A POLICY AND WOULD
MAKE ITS POSITION CLEAR WITH BOTH THE RTG AND THE UNHCR.
CHAYET ASKED WHETHER THIS SUBJECT WOULD BE DISCUSSED
DURING THE OCTOBER MEETING IN GENEVA WITH THE UNHCR.

3. CHAYET SAID THAT THE CONTINUING DECREASE IN QUALITY
OF THE REFUGEES UNDERLINED THE NEED EVENTUALLY TO GET

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SCA-01 INSE-00 H-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07
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THAILAND TO ACCEPT A RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM FOR THOSE MORE READILY ASSIMILABLE IN THAILAND. HE NOTED THAT THAILAND ALREADY CONTAINED OVER 8 MILLION ETHNIC LAO, AND THAT THERE HAS BEEN A LONG HISTORY OF MOVEMENTS BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE MEKONG DEPENDING UPON CONDITIONS IN LAOS AND THAILAND. IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO RESETTLE SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF LAO AMONG THEIR FELLOW LAO OF NORTHEAST THAILAND. ALSO, MANY OF THE MINORITY PEOPLES OF THE NORTH LIVED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LAO/THAI BORDER AND SOME OF THEM SHOULD CERTAINLY BE ASSIMILABLE IN THAILAND. EVEN IN THE CASE OF THE CAMBODIANS, THERE WERE ETHNIC GROUPS WITHIN THAILAND WHICH COULD ABSORB THEIR COUSINS FROM ACROSS THE BORDER.

4. WHILE AGREEING THAT THE RTG HAD MOST GENEROUSLY ACCEPTED LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES FROM THE THREE
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INDOCHINESE COUNTRIES FOR TEMPORARY HAVEN, CHAYET THOUGHT THERE WAS A CERTAIN HYPOCRISY IN OTHER ASPECTS OF THE

RTG REFUGEE POLICY. HE THOUGHT IT CONTRADICTORY TO PLACE THE REFUGEE CAMPS CLOSE TO THE BORDERS WHERE THEY WERE USED AS RECRUITING AND TRAINING AREAS FOR OPERATIONS AGAINST LAOS AND CAMBODIA AND THEN TO COMPLAIN THAT THE PRESENCE OF REFUGEES DAMAGED THAI RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. CHAYET EVEN THOUGHT THAT THE CURRENT EFFORT TO INTRODUCE A CONCEPT OF "ECONOMIC REFUGEE" WHO COULD BE TURNED BACK WAS ANOTHER WAY FOR THE THAI GOVERNMENT TO ATTEMPT TO GET MORE MONEY OUT OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTICULARLY COUNTRIES LIKE THE US AND FRANCE WHICH ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE WELFARE OF REFUGEES. CHAYET THOUGHT THAT MOVING THE CAMPS TO LESS SENSITIVE LOCATIONS AND RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS WHICH BUSIED THE REFUGEES WITH EARNING A LIVING RATHER THAN AGITATING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENTS OF THAILAND'S NEIGHBORS WOULD BE LESS PROVOCATIVE THAN THAILAND'S CURRENT PROGRAM. SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD OBVIOUSLY NOT INCLUDE VIETNAMESE WHICH OTHER COUNTRIES WOULD HAVE TO CONTINUE TO TAKE OFF THE RTG HANDS. HARTMAN

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